

Andrew Jackson to John Coffee, December 11, 1813, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO JOHN COFFEE.

Fort Strother, December 11, 1813

Dr. Sir: In my last I advised you of the threatened, result of the 10th. I am happy to say to you the 10th. is past and the scenes of the 9th give tranquility to my camp on the 10th. The idea was held out, that it was the disquietude of the ranks, that raised the ground work of the remonstrance of the officers, but when it came to the Test I found it (as it will allways be found) that it lurk beneath the dark and hidden duplicity of officers in my confidence and whom I never before suspected. I found no mutinous disposition in the ranks, when brought to the Test. indeed I must confess I had my artilery so aranged, (and the militia who merit and receive my thanks) that was well calculated, to compell obedience. but still I say I discovered no mutinous or seditious disposition in the ranks. from the want of supplies, and the various complaints, I announced verbally, that one (or on extraordinary occasions,) Two to be Detached to bring up supplies for each company, and the result proves, that nine commissioned officers and non commissioned officers, are detached on this service for one private, which fully proves, where the will existed where it had its birth, and it is ever to be deplored that they would be patriotts at home and wish to continue so, and add to their popularity in the camp, hesitate not to state unfounded facts, to throw blame if Possible upon others that the[y] know the[y] do not deserve and like Sempronius in the Roman Senate after he had sold his country and betrayed his army, appeared in the Senate, and in his speech declared his voice was still for war.

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I have a right to believe that Colo William Martin, in whom you know I had the greatest confidence has been at the bottom of all the mischief and disgrace that has and will attach to the volunteers, from their represented mutinous disposition, when an enemy is collecting in our front within fifty miles.¹ in this situation he is ransacking his brane,

¹ In July, 1828, Colonel Martin published a defense of his conduct. It appeared in the *National Banner and Nashville Whig*, and in the following year was published in a pamphlet with the title of *The Self-Vindication of Colonel William Martin*. Of the mutiny on the night of Dec. 9, 1813, he has the following statement (p. 14):

“During this time all my exertions were used to quiet the discontents inseperable from such a state of things. Although I did believe them (as I thought all did) entitled to be discharged on the tenth, yet I urged that if it was withheld they should not go off in a disobedient way while I could prevent it. Those exertions were supported by most of the officers, so that it appeared after a few days, they were disposed to waive their claim for the present, and await the arrival of fresh troops, which the General said would soon be there. Thus were those discontents for the present quieted, and so continued until the night of the ninth, when we were aroused by the General's famous order for the brigade to be paraded. About the usual time for lying down, General Hall came to my quarters, under the appearance of considerable excitement, told me that General Jackson had ordered the brigade to parade in front of the fort, to be disarmed by the militia: for me to parade my regiment forthwith. This I did without delay, and the disagreeable scene then exhibited is truly set forth in the statement of facts below, signed by General Hall and others. While the General was abusing us for mutiny, etc. he was told that the men were not in a state of mutiny, and asked for his author, he replied, Gen. Hall. This Gen. Hall promptly denied. Notwithstanding this, the General's biographer has had the unblushing effrontery to say, that ‘on the evening of the ninth, General Hall hastened to the tent of General Jackson, with information that his whole brigade was in a state of mutiny, and making preparations to move forcibly off.’ This is as false as what he says about the brigade, when attempting to go off previous to the tenth, being driven back to their tents by the militia, as nothing of

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the kind, either directly or indirectly, during the whole time these men were in service, ever took place.

“Waving this controversy between the General and those volunteers, they continued to do their duty, and behaved with their usual subordination and decorum, for which they were at all times remarkable. Not the first appearance of mutiny ever came to my knowledge, and it would have been impossible for any thing of the kind to have taken place without it, I being always in the midst of them, except when on command. What gave rise to the tragedy on the night of the ninth, I never knew, but I always thought that some misrepresentations had been made to the General at that time, as had all along been, respecting the disorderly disposition of those men. It is hardly supposable that if they had been in a state of mutiny, as charged, they would, with such promptitude have obeyed the order to parade for the purpose of being disarmed, *deep in the enemy's country*. Let any reasonable man think of this, and ask himself, if this alone is not sufficient to refute the charge. A few days, however, after the tenth, the General ordered the brigade to be marched to Nashville, though not before the arrival of a large reinforcement of more than a thousand men, under General Cocke. On the march, an order was received from the Governor for the men to be dismissed until further orders which have not yet come.”

From the statement of Brigadier-General Wm. Hall and seven other high officers of the brigade of volunteers, made Mar. 4, 1814, and alluded to by Colonel Martin above, the following extract is made (*ibid.*, p. 18): “The men quietly in their camps, between eight and nine o'clock, P. M., were ordered to form in front of the fort for the purpose of being disarmed by the militia. After being formed they were insultingly charged by the General with mutiny, desertion, and many other opprobrious expressions; and he concluded by saying that the flash of the cannon should be the signal of their destruction. It was denied that the troops were in a state of mutiny; they only asked an indulgence of their rights. At this time the militia was in front of the line, for the purpose of disarming the volunteers, the cannon loaded, manned and stationed, under the immediate direction of the General, so as to rake the line, and other arrangements made to carry on the work of death. After the

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General had disgorged his rage, he proposed their waiting the arrival of Major Searcy or Colonel Carroll, as before mentioned; this was assented to and the brigade dismissed. On the thirteenth, the General addressed the volunteers in a manner calculated to insult and wound their feelings, and immediately issued an order to General Hall, commanding him to march the brigade to Nashville, and there await the orders of Governor Blount and the President of the United States. . . . During the dispute between the volunteers and the General *they* behaved with their usual subordination and decorum, having determined not to disperse without an honorable discharge. They contended for this with a respectful firmness not to be shaken by boisterous threats.”

misrepresenting facts, to obtain (or compel me to do an act I am not authorised) to discharge the Troops whether from a fear of facing the increasing strength of the creeks or whether to increas his popularity with the volunteers when they return, time will unfold; certain it is if he and others had employed their time and talents, to have induced the brave volunteers to have faced their enemy and exterminate them first; they then could have like heroes required an honourable discharge. What honourable; a requisition for a discharge in the face of an enemy when all our force was necessary to destroy them and that too at a time when report says that the Georgia army is defeated, and all their force will be turned against me—and under these circumstances to ask an honourable discharge shoes what ideas of honor such feelings Possesses. but I have put mutiny down, I will keep it down or Perish in the attemp. I have barely to state we have no bread stuff here; ration for this day only. I have only to say to you to forrage your horses and move up with the contractors supply.

I wish we had supplies. orders from Genl Pinckney that reached me yesterday if I had supplies would make it necessary to move on, we must forward the moment bread stuff can be had. Genl Cocke will reach me tomorrow, and for gods sake say to Pope and Brahan we must have supplies or the campaign from Tennessee will be defeated and our State disgraced. as soon as a supply can be up I wish you with it, and I hope your whole Brigade has again returned to the field. write me your strength. Genl Pinckney has

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required a report of my strength, and the number of Troops in the field from Tennessee, without your return I cannot make it to him. I expect to hear today from the Georgia army I have pushed a runner thro the creeks if he escapes I shall see him to night or tomorrow. I hope you left Polly and all friends well. Push on Stockley Hay and Searcy. I am more than surprised that they were not here on the 9th. Hays must be on, and Searcy I have expected from the 7th. With due regard yrs